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ABSTRACT

This handbook presents various approaches to a strategic planning model, using the Matrix as a planning tool. The Matrix is an instrument for focusing, summarizing, and addressing achievement issues. Part 1, "Windows on Planning," discusses planning and minority students, avoiding pitfalls, distinguishing planning processes, planning for the possible, planning and stakeholders, and master planning. It includes the strategic planning process (pre-planning, organizing responsibilities for planning, and confirming the planning timeline) and constructing the plan (establish the guidance system, compose strategic policies, perform critical analysis, revisit mission and planning policies, compose planning assumptions, formulate long range goals, formulate objectives, formulate strategies, and formulate action plans). Part 2, "Unpacking the Matrix: The Planning Agenda," describes the Matrix framework. Part 3, "The Matrix and Planning," presents Matrix planning activities (identifying actors, agents, and roles; the Matrix and critical analysis; the Matrix and developing strategies; and unpacking the Matrix). Two appendices include a letter and form for stakeholder input and side by side analysis. (SM)

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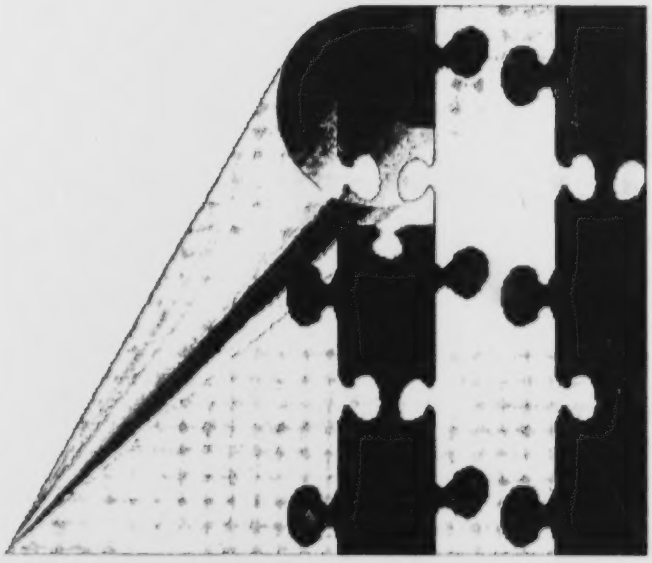
PUTTING IT TOGETHER

A HANDBOOK ON PLANNING AND THE MATRIX



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MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
ACHIEVEMENT INITIATIVE FOR MARYLAND'S MINORITY STUDENTS

June 2002

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FOREWORD

"Education from the systemic level to the individual student must be treated as an evolving, inclusive process. Not anticipating eventualities and planning for contingencies can become formidable barriers to progress in education."

Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

Today Maryland is recognized throughout this nation for leadership in education. In 1999, the State Superintendent developed Achievement Initiative for Maryland's Minority Students (AIMMS) to help address the situation of minority students. At that time, she charged the AIMMS Steering Committee to serve the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and local schools systems by providing technical assistance and recommendations related to confronting the problem of achievement disparities between groups of students. MSDE also has enlisted the *Visionary Panel for Better Schools* and *Achieve, Incorporated* to produce major reports with recommendations that address the advancement of education throughout the state . During the period since then, both the federal *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* and the state *Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act* have passed. All of the above endeavors contribute to the ongoing statewide reform movement to secure equity in education for all children.

In Maryland, elimination of all achievement gaps has been a paramount goal for some time. An essential part of confronting achievement gaps through reform involves increased emphasis on effective planning to target and coordinate efforts within and between the state and local school systems. The *Bridge to Excellence* legislation reaffirms that principle in its call for "master planning.' Strategic planning inherently refers to change and the future. During the planning process, we consider preferable futures – an array of futures of what could happen when we pursue agreed upon outcomes. Once those choices are identified, the plan assures that all changes in the way business is conducted are necessary and in the desired direction. In turn, the plan solidifies those changes to result in greater productivity or improvements in performance, especially for students.

Strategic planning must be approached with flexibility – one phase impacts others; one component affects the component that follows it as well as those that preceded it. Thus, planning is a progressive process that involves constantly revisiting steps in the process. This approach ensures a concise and focused plan. Construction of an educational agency's, whether state or local, strategic plan should be based on the following premises:

- Willingness to change the way we think about education;
- Willingness to break outdated, outmoded institutional paradigms;
- Willingness to open the school systems to a broader, diverse community;
- Willingness to establish dialog regarding
  - Educational Context,
  - Educational Concepts,
  - Educational Content;
- Willingness to develop a shared vision and sense of mission; and
- Willingness to develop operational plans to link that vision and mission with reality.

Finally, strategic planning is a means by which an organization recreates itself to attain "extraordinary purpose." A sound strategic plan derives from a variety of inputs from stakeholders affiliated with the educational agency and its communities. If properly developed, it will guide and enable the agency to efficiently concentrate its efforts and resources on attaining its mission. The plan then helps actualize goals, objectives, and strategies by translating them into the practical day-to-day operation of the school system and schools. Essentially, the strategic plan builds on the past, embraces the future, and focuses on the possible.

The text that follows centers on various approaches to a strategic planning model and the Matrix as a planning tool. This handbook is not exhaustive or a prescription for constructing master plans at either the state or local levels. Rather, it's contents are intended only to spur thought and provide prospective planners further insight into potentials of the planning discipline and process.

B.D.

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PART I

WINDOWS ON PLANNING

The following section © 2001, 2002 by Dr. Barbara Dezmon. Produced for AIMMS Steering Committee and Maryland State Department of Education.

Planning and Minority Students

With changing demographics, growing migration of minorities to the suburbs, and the personal, economic, and social consequences of not effectively educating minority and poor students, it is perhaps more vital now than ever to revise conceptualizations of schooling to treat differently issues that affect these students' education. True, many school systems across nation have attempted to address minority concerns. But often these attempts have been either prescriptive, to offset problems which are nationally documented, or reactionary, to solve problems which have often already progressed too far. Exacerbating the flawed planning premises, though agencies may develop grand objectives for success for minority students, these objectives frequently do not recognize the ethnic peculiarities of these students. Instead, plans for minority students often perpetuate the underlying theme of making "them" more like the majority. Further worsening the situation, while these plans emanate from administrative offices and much time consumption, the plans sometimes do not include components to adequately address training of staff, implementation, and assessment. Nor are they built on planning schemes that provide structure for further planning within individual schools. In short, school systems must provide means and protocols by which their plans may be effectively extrapolated, implemented and evaluated throughout the organization.

Plans addressing minority issues should also include more focus on obtaining input and support from the minority community. A major problem is that minorities are often planned for and not planned with. In addition, school systems should be certain to develop plans which genuinely speak to the idiosyncrasies of their minority communities and staffs, not plans molded from generic norms and merely pasted to those groups. When planning for any students, and especially minority students, plans must be strategic and reach for the ideal. Too often, plans for minority students are constructed from a deficit perspective. These plans are more frequently reactive than proactive.

Approaching Planning: Avoiding Pitfalls

Education institutionally must remain open to constant transformation. In a rapidly changing global environment with its international competition, technological transitions, shifting demographics, and ecological concerns, education must continuously evolve to produce to meet the demands of a society and workforce that require new knowledge, new skills, and, thus, new learning. Organizations can not depend on reform occurring by chance or evolving from institutional archetypes. Reform must be intentional; therefore, perhaps now more than ever, there is need for incisive planning.

There appear to be three common states of being that plague education planning – **the Unplan**, the **Ex Post Facto Plan**, and the **Situational Plan** – all of which are doomed to failure and lack organizational commitment. The Unplan occurs when an organization usually has a high morally driven mission and goals; however, the actions to accomplish these aims are not fully developed and documented. Organizations operating in the unplan mode often depend on communication between line staff and job descriptions to accomplish desired results. Checks and balances and benchmarks are more dependent upon meetings and discussions. In this condition, standards are left to varying interpretations. The Ex Post Facto or After the Fact Plan, for all lack of intents and purposes, on the surface may contain all the elements of a plan. However, this type of plan is driven more by the past than any vision of the future. The process by which this plan is developed usually consists of

organizations asking various departments or offices to compile their current efforts. This approach serves more as a tool to garner public relations and give the impression of intense activity. In truth, however, it is more indicative of justification of activities within the organization than an intent to move in any visionary direction. This plan does not challenge the organization and its various levels of staff to step outside the box, rather it pads the box. Organizations that operate under such planning tend to remain static, experiencing minimal to negligible progress over time. The final approach involves the Situational Plan, not to be confused with situational management, decision-making, or leadership. This approach to planning is very temporary and tentative. Again, it does not stimulate or require much long-term thought. It is born of reaction. Essentially, there is no master plan, but many little plans that are developed in response to various circumstances. These circumstances may include pressures from stakeholders or legislative compliance issues. This type of plan usually reflects efforts that are more akin to stop-gap measures. It is also geared to maintaining the status quo. The above mis-approaches to planning can continue for years, until inevitable crisis or cataclysm intervenes. The ironic aspect of these plans is that, while they breed dysfunction and disequilibrium, organizations can continue over time in these modes and appear very busy working toward their goals. For after for a while, dysfunction can become functional.

Basically, a plan must be accompanied by an intent to act to accomplish specified goals and objectives over a certain time period. In the case of a strategic plan, this period may comprise 3 to 5 years. Accordingly, revision of the plan continues during this time to ascertain, through the benchmarks and milestones installed in the plan, whether these goals or objectives are being met. If they are not, the reason should be identified and the plan amended. Progress occurs on a continuum; it is incremental. For example, to state that "in 12 years, we will close the achievement gap," while a positive goal, means little when not accompanied by a set of actions, timeline, and benchmarks to gauge intervening progress during that 12 year period. In essence, such a statement without adequate back-up serves only one purpose; it buys time.

Distinguishing Planning Processes

There are a few types of plans to consider. The dilemma is that often plans that are intended to address specific circumstances are presented as systemic master plans. Or worse, organizations often take a bunch of mini-plans and just join them with a few well placed, superficial segues and present them as the master plan. Basically, the system is not much better off than it would have been with no plan at all – since the efforts that arise from such approaches lean toward being disjointed and disconnected. Therefore it is essential to differentiate between needs, program, and strategic planning. While the three protocols may speak to the similar issues, they differ in desired overall results. Needs assessment and program planning tend to focus on intervention(s) to address certain issues or problems; whereas, strategic planning includes interventions for a school system to reach as closely as possible an optimum state. Needs assessment and program plans are often of shorter duration, less encompassing than strategic plans, and targeted on specific areas of concern related to the current status. That is not to say that these plans do not include the future. However, the expectation on which these plans are based is not as future oriented as that of the strategic plan. Appropriately, these plans are more in reaction to contemporary states of affair and less oriented to future dispositions. These plans, due to their nature, lean more toward problem solving rather than future possibilities.

Planning for the Possible, Not the Probable

Strategic planning is about the possible and derives from a "can do" philosophy. It doesn't focus on "what will be," but on "what ought to be." It is optimistic, not fatalistic. It is flexible, not inextricably encased in structure. It must be predictive and proactive. It stresses the future, not justifies the present or the past. Successful strategic planning maintains the fragile balance between the ideal and reality. Strategic plans are anticipatory and project preferable futures. They center on what could happen if we pursue agreed upon organizational outcomes. Still, the strategic plan must reflect a practical, objective reality. There is certainly a difference between planning toward the ideal and planning for the impossible.

It is unwise to plan for impossibilities. Plans steeped in impossibilities become sources of frustration and pose their own obstacles to implementation. Plans composed for impossibilities lose commitment over time. Additionally, they often raise the ire of a public who respond that the organization knew from the beginning that the plans were not realizable. On the flip side, the plan may be too narrowed just on the probable. Such plans more or less reflect the current capacities of the organization. They do not drive the organization or its constituents to a more favorable state. In fact, these plans are detriments to progress; essentially, we are planning for what would have probably occurred with little to no intervening change with how business has been conducted ordinarily.

Planning and Stakeholders

Predominant in truly effective planning is the meaningful involvement of stakeholders in the process. Educational plans sometimes become so hung-up on process that the intent of the plan is diminished. While stakeholders must be involved, it must be quality involvement. Stakeholders must be involved in meaningful ways at appropriate stages during planning. Often plans are dedicated more to stakeholders approval than to doing what is necessary for sound educational reform. Such planning approaches become bogged down in meetings and structural impediments such as committees, task forces, and sub committees, which are geared more to gain approval than substantive input. When and how should community be involved? Community members should be involved at crucial points before, during, and after the planning process. There is no need for a community to be involved in the actual technical construction of the plan. Professionals who have expertise in this area can do this for the community. However, the community should play a key role early in establishing plan components, such as the mission, beliefs, and analysis of the status of the school system related to education of students. All stakeholders should be represented in order to arrive at a consensus about related to needs and future direction. Along this line, the community should also be called upon to review the plan to ascertain that its best interests have been addressed. Planning is not a static endeavor, where some document in stone is produced. Planning is ongoing, and plans should be developed to be revised as circumstances and priorities change.

Master Planning

Strategic plans reflect many operational aspects of an organization and are indicative of how an organization functions to address its mission. Why do strategic plans as instruments fail? They usually fail if one or more of the following conditions exist – they are developed from a reactive stance; they reflect an inability to change with circumstances; they contain too may quick fixes; or, they include piecemeal strategies. With so many factors impacting educational organizations, development and implementation of effective plans are essential. The factors that must be addressed by schools now include recommendations in the Visionary Panel's *Achievement Matters Most* and Achieve's *Aiming Higher* as well as the federal *ESEA - No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* and Maryland's recent *Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act*. The call for higher standards, whether national, state, or local, must also refer to raising standards in planning. Planning, if not approached properly, causes its own dilemma. In many organizations, there appear to be a plethora of plans – disjointed and tripping over one another. Often creating the plan becomes an end in itself. In this instance, the plan becomes a substitute for action and may actually thwart progress. One symptom of this phenomenon occurs in educational agencies when there are a multitude of plans that are often not connected to one another in any meaningful way. In this situation, the right hand frequently does not know, or, for that matter, does not care what the left is doing. To worsen the matter, various segments of the organization may be following their own plans based on little more than isolated interpretations of the agency's mission and with limited accountability. With too many plans, the efforts becomes disguised, and the required reforms become subsumed in the various planning processes.

Planning can not be done just for the sake of it – a plan for this and a plan for that. In light of recent demands for reform in education, efficacious planning is paramount for the success of students. To that end, there must be a master plan that each department or office or school within a state or local system can draw upon as an anchor for its individual action planning in order to accomplish the necessary reforms. It is much more efficient to extract elements from a master plan to fulfill certain state or federal requirements than it is to develop a plan as separate mandates occur. The plan should also contain accountability mechanisms that preclude any individuals or groups from just arbitrarily altering initiatives. Again, it is important that there be consistency among and within state and local plans, so that the plans are readily comprehended by those within the agencies as well as other publics. When plans are properly constructed and include the appropriate components that have evolved from a suitable process, they are more likely to be successful.

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The Planning Discipline

The Planning Discipline is comprised of the elements that must be included in the plan, while the process details steps in addressing those elements. One element follows another and should be an outgrowth of the other. Below, these components are placed in the order in which they may be attended during the planning process.

- Statement of Beliefs – statements of the fundamental values held by the state educational agency (SEA) or local school system (LSS).
- Mission Statement – a statement of the SEA's or LSS's basic purpose and function.
- Strategic Policies – statements that set limitations and provide focus for the plan , based on the SEA's or LSS's mission and beliefs. Strategic policies are usually phrased in negative terms indicating what the educational SEA or LSS can or can not do.
- Primary Goals (Optional) – statements of universal aims that correlate with the school system's mission for the school system. These statements are brief and concise and are often used in conjunction with and to elaborate the mission statement.
- Critical Analysis – an examination of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities for improvement, threats, and other factors, both within and external to the SEA or LSS, that will influence accomplishment of the mission. Includes both internal and external analyses, with an analysis of competition.
- Critical Issues – identification of major threats and opportunities that impact SEA or LSS in accomplishing its mission.
- Planning Assumptions – statements about current trends or projections about future conditions that will impact the SEA or LSS
- Long Range Goals – measurable long term results that the school system intends to accomplish over the next 5 years.
- Objectives – specific statements of measurable, observable, or demonstrable outcomes to accomplish the mission and goals of the system. Objectives often reflect an incremental approach and are set for one year intervals if used with long range goals..

- Key Strategies (Optional) – statements that summarize global approaches or efforts in which the SEA or LSS will engage to realize both goals and objectives.

- Strategies – broad statements of approaches departments or offices within SEA or LSS will take to reach objectives. Strategies must relate to specific objectives.

- Action Plans – descriptions of specific actions to be taken to accomplish results outlined in the strategies. Includes related evaluation mechanisms and cost benefit analysis.

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

"A major detriment to effective planning occurs when planners get sidetracked and time locked. Often a dynamic of celebrating past accomplishments and expiating past shortcomings sets in. While this may reveal some useful information, it is not the purpose of planning, nor is it beneficial to the process."

Dr. Barbara Dezmon

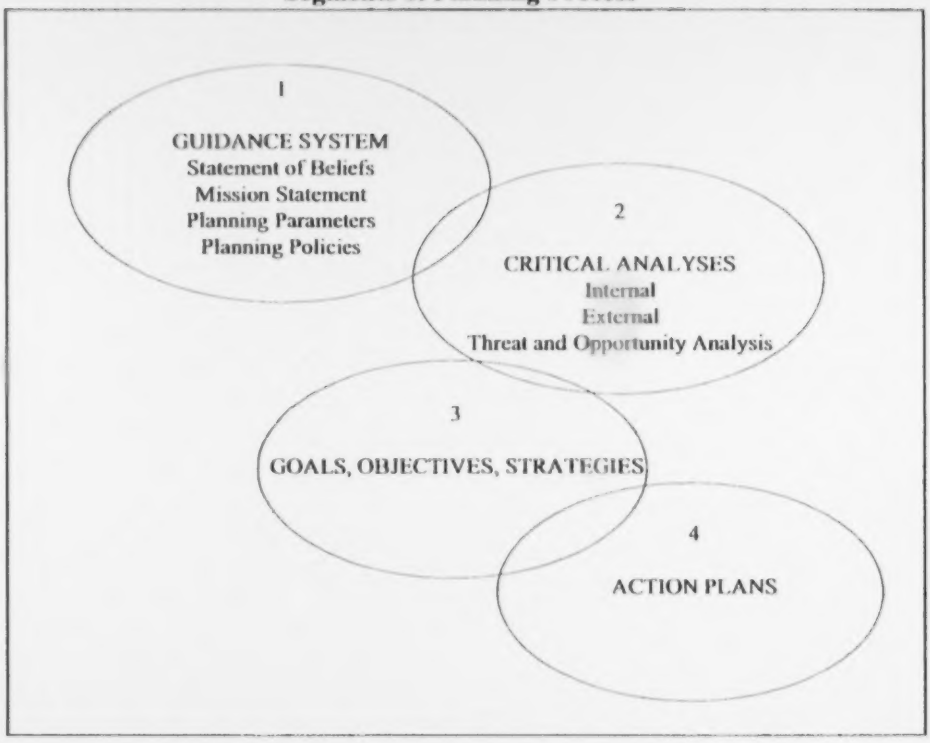
Development of the strategic plan occurs in three phases: (1) pre-planning, (2) planning, and (3) review, evaluation and revision of the plan. First, planning does not need to be a full community event throughout the process. Planning time must be allocated strategically. Too often the process is consumed in a number of meetings where stakeholders that represent various segments of the community are called together to express their concerns and wishes. Sometimes these events are not effective because they are diverted to special interests that won't necessarily serve the school system's mission for all children. Community input is a valuable resource and should be treated as such; therefore, community involvement should be targeted to where it will be most worthwhile during the process. Educators are the experts about how to approach learning and achievement in the plan. Accordingly, they have the primary responsibility for constructing the bulk of the plan. Community stakeholders should be deployed to confirm that their needs and the needs of the children are being met in the plan. A primary role of community members should be to provide input about the mission, the different phases of the critical analysis, and then for the review and evaluation of the plan. Task forces or committees that include leaders who represent the community in general can perform these functions.

The process for developing the plan involves several critical steps, which are manifest in the final plan. Appropriately, these steps have to involve stakeholders from the school system and community at different junctures of the process.

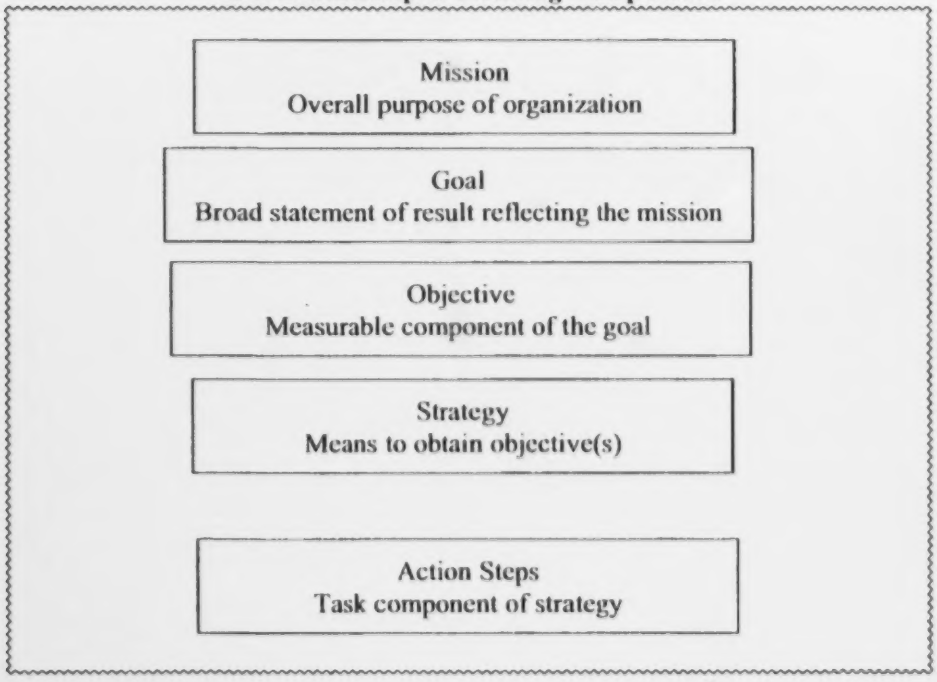
- Establishment of the guidance system, consisting of mission and belief statements.
- Development of strategic policies which involves determining what the school system can and can not do.
- Performance of a critical analysis of internal and external conditions that affect the effectiveness of the school system.
- Establishment of goals in accordance with the mission.
- Establishment of long and/or short range objectives to meet the goals.
- Establishment of strategies that grow from the objectives and position the school system to take action.
- Establishment of actions plans to implement strategies.
- Establishment of an evaluation scheme that applies to every component of the plan.

Strategic planning is a fluid procedure comprised of interrelated components. The following diagrams illustrate the planning configuration and its sequential elements. Each part of the plan builds on the other, moving from the global mission to specifics of the action plans. This seamless relationship enables planners to continuously revisit different segments or component of the plan for revision as more knowledge and direction evolve during the planning process.

Segments of Planning Process



Interrelationship of Planning Components



PRE-PLANNING: ORGANIZING TO PLAN

Good planning requires careful preparation. Otherwise, the process becomes disjointed and even chaotic. Prior to planning, it is important to outline when and how the plan will be developed as well as accompanying planning costs. This involves setting a scheme for the allocation of resources, including human, financial, and time. The planning budget may include costs such as for development and distribution of surveys for information gathering, meetings, consultant fees, etc. Along this same line, agencies should invest in training on planning for internal and external stakeholders. Too often individuals or groups are called upon to contribute to an isolated portion of the plan without adequate knowledge of the total process. The lack of information may negatively evidence itself at later stages of planning. During planning, time is truly a valuable commodity and should not be wasted. Certain stages of planning provide opportunity for dialogs, which can become interminable if not gauged. Therefore, deadlines should be firmly set and met.

Before actual planning it is important to set ground rules and determine how the process will be coordinated and who will be involved at the various stages of planning. Some questions to be considered at this point are:

- What will be the nature of the planning teams?
- Who will comprise the planning teams?
- What stakeholders be involved?
- How will stakeholders be involved?
- How will information be communicated to planners?
- How will public be kept informed during planning?
- How will plan be communicated to constituents and general public?

Organizing Responsibilities for Planning

The **Core Planning Team** develops systemwide goals, objectives, planning policies. The Core Planning Team also contributes to as well as oversees the Critical Analysis. This team is also responsible for oversight of the entire planning process.

- Core Planning Team for state agency may consist of the superintendent, department heads, state board representative(s), appropriate department heads, local superintendent representatives, as well as leaders representing education preK through 16, parents, and community.

- Core Planning Team for a local system may consist of the superintendent, local board representative(s), appropriate department heads, principals, teachers, and parent, civic, and community leaders.

After these components are developed at the systemwide level, the information is passed to the **Action Planning Teams.** These teams consist of the appropriate departments within the organization. The Action Planning Teams will further refine as well as expand the goals, objectives, and strategies into action plans. When action plans are completed, this information is returned to the Core Planning Team for review and possible revision. The plan is then submitted to the

superintendent. At this time the superintendent reviews and may resubmit the plan or parts of it for further revision or clarification. Once the superintendent has approved the plan, it will be submitted to the Board, local or state, for review, recommendations, and approval. Review of the plan at any stage involves all completed information at that point.

As stated earlier, strategic planning is based on a process that must remain fluid. Even a completed plan that has been approved by the designated parties should be subjected to continuous review, evaluation, and amendment – at least on an annual basis.

Confirm the Planning Timeline

The strategic planning process may cover a time period from six to nine months. In developing the plan , it is important to establish the timeline for planning. This serves as a reference for tracking progress during the various planning stages and should be continuously updated. It can also help pinpoint potential problem areas. The timeline should be shared with all participants in the process as well as other stakeholders. This approach furnishes another means of obtaining broad ownership of the plan when it is completed.

Sample Timeline Template

Planning Activity	Due Date	Status	Completion Date	Responsible Party(s)
Establishment of Guidance System				
Performance of Critical Analysis				
Development of Strategic Policies				
Establishment of Key Long Range Goals				
Establishment of Objectives				
Establishment of Key Strategies				
Establishment and Submission of Action Plans				
Review (by stakeholders) and Evaluation of Plan				
Submission to Superintendent				
Submission to Board of Education				

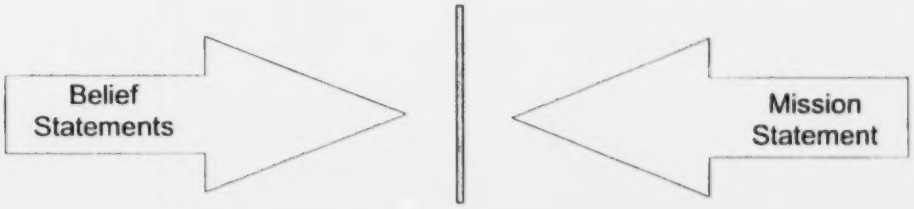
CONSTRUCTING THE PLAN

STEP 1. ESTABLISH THE GUIDANCE SYSTEM

The foundation of the strategic plan mainly consists of the mission and beliefs statements. Goals, objectives, and strategies are all based on these components and critical issues. Essentially, the guidance system forms the root of the plan. For this handbook, strategic policies have been added to the guidance system. For these statements are useful in defining "what can or cannot be included in the plan." Another change concerns focusing on beliefs statements prior to developing the mission statement.

What comes first – mission or beliefs?

Components of strategic planning process are interdependent. Nothing is set in stone, not even the final plan. Contrary to popular practice, it is often beneficial to develop Belief Statements before the Mission Statement for an organization or school system. Belief statements furnish a foundation for the mission.



Belief Statements

Strategic plans start at the visionary as expressed in the beliefs and mission statements then move to the concrete action plans. Belief statements are an opportunity to concentrate and share what the organization and its stakeholders believe about the work and the function of the organization. These concise statements are broad in nature and serve to help establish or reiterate the fundamental values of the SEA or LSS. In addition, these precise declarations provide motives for the plan itself.

Examples of Belief Statements

We believe that:

- All students are capable of learning and should experience success.
- Parents and community must be partner educators in the education process.
- Every individual has a right to equitable educational opportunities and resources.

Mission Statement

The mission statement conveys the overall aim or purpose of the organization and the organization's ultimate desired impact on its stakeholders and clients. Mission statements are in themselves statements of grand intentions. These statements tell what the organization is about, why it exists, and what it hopes to accomplish. They also form a prefatory rationale for the rest of the plan. Mission Statements contain stem phrases that may be present or future oriented.

Example. The school system educates ...
The school system will prepare ...
The school system will inculcate ...
The school system will instill...

For any educational agency, the mission statement must address how that agency will serve students. Below is an example of a very general mission statement.

Example.

The mission of the _____ School System is to prepare all students to become useful and productive citizens in a global society.

The mission statement is the anchor of the plan – it is the prime referential point. The mission statement should capture the soul of the organization. Basically there must be investment in the mission as in any other portion of the plan. The mission statement is the first statement of commitment. The mission statement expresses these main elements: vision, values, and key goal(s). The following example demonstrates these characteristics.

Example.

The mission of the _____ is to provide a quality education for all students—one that develops the skills, abilities, and attitudes that will enable them to succeed now and in the future. All resources—human, fiscal, and material—must be concentrated on the overall goal of continuous improvement of student learning.

STEP 2. COMPOSE STRATEGIC POLICIES

The strategic policies set parameters for the plan. Strategic policies are statements about the limitations that the planners or planning groups places on themselves. In addition to providing further focus for the plan, the policies help identify how the agency will concentrate its operation overall to meet the mission and beliefs. Much more than rhetoric, the process of discussing and developing strategic policies can save time and bring focus for planners during the rest of the process. Forming strategic policies is an exercise that is often not executed during planning. However, it can be very beneficial in the long run. Strategic policies often represent unavoidable constraints, such as legal mandates, ethical considerations, and norms of professional practice. These statements are usually expressed in the negative, but can also be from a positive stance. The strategic policies should also be reviewed and revised where necessary after completion of the Critical Analysis.

Examples.

- We will not allow policies, behaviors, or procedures that impede student success.
- We will only develop educational initiatives that meet the needs of an academically, ethnically, and physically diverse student population.
- We will develop support programs based on community and student needs, rather than staff availability.
- We will plan for learning environments to address the differentiated needs of students.

STEP 3. PERFORM CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The critical analysis indeed provides information that is useful in establishing planning assumptions, particularly when you are dealing with numerous variables such as those that impact minority achievement. Gathering of information relevant to the critical analysis can begin at the beginning of the planning process. This information should be considered in light of the mission, beliefs, and planning policies. Critical analysis offers insight into factors affecting the school system from both internal and external perspectives. Some of this information can be gathered through techniques like surveys, study circles, and focus groups. The critical analysis consists of:

Internal Analysis
External Analysis
Identification of Critical Issues
Formation of Planning Assumptions

During the critical analysis stage, planners should also review the various programs or initiatives started in the past to determine if they have been effective and should continue. Remember that this planning is about much more than needs; it concerns future direction. A good place to begin a critical analysis is providing background information about the school system. This includes a summary of its history, significant changes that have occurred over time, and its accomplishments and challenges up to the present. Afterwards, focus should move to the various analyses.

INTERNAL ANALYSIS

The "Internal Analysis" examines the inner-workings of the SEA or school system in relationship to its vision, mission, and goals. Internal analysis shapes a critique related to the functioning of the organization . Internal analysis deals with factors such as staffing, facilities, and fiscal resources. During this analysis, strengths and weaknesses are identified as those aspects that either enhance or impede the agency in accomplishing its mission. Using staff, client, and community input, this analysis centers on factors that impact the organization internally, including human and fiscal resources. Much of this information is obtained from internal stakeholders. Internal stakeholders include teachers, administrators, board member, support staff, etc. Strengths and weaknesses should be considered for their potential use in planning. Keep in mind that during strategic planning, weaknesses are viewed as opportunities for improvement.

Example of strengths.

> The school system focuses on student achievement data through the extensive use of comprehensive systemwide and school data to improve academic performance.
>
> The school system offers a full continuum of benefits for faculty and staff.

Examples of weaknesses.

> The involvement of the school system staff in the community is not a strategic priority. This limits the extent to which the school system can act to strengthen the community and the extent to this involvement can be used to promote the school system goals.
>
> There is no systematic approach to anticipating public concerns with school system operations. Therefore it is difficult for school system to proactively prepare for these concerns.

EXTERNAL ANALYSIS

External analysis addresses social, demographic, economic, political, technological, scientific factors as well as educational trends and influences. Like the internal analysis, the external analysis focuses on strengths and weaknesses, but from the external environment. This analysis also involves looking at threats to the agency's mission and opportunities for improvement. External analysis concentrates largely on stakeholders such as parents, students, government, business, unions, and the public in general. Here again, approaches like surveys, focus groups, study circles, and other activities that stimulate dialog are useful for gathering input. In considering strengths and weaknesses, it is important to do so from the perspective of these arenas: students, community and parents, faculty and staff, fiscal, governance, physical infrastructure, and curriculum and instruction. See Appendix A for letters for stakeholder input.

COMPETITION ANALYSIS

The Competition Analysis compares attributes of an SEA or LSS to those of its major competitors offering similar services. Competition analysis usually considers the relative advantages of an agency(s) compared to others that offer the same services to clients and the public. For instance, a competition analysis might show that while the public schools have to address a broader student population with a wider array of needs than private schools, there are many advantages in the areas of staffing, support services, technology, and other resources. Another source of competition derives from unrelated agencies or organizations that are competing for fiscal resources. In the case of public school systems, competition often stems from private and parochial schools. For individual schools, competition may exist with the same system, such as magnet and comprehensive high schools. During the competition analysis, competitive advantages as well as threats should be enumerated. Overall, competition analysis is a component that provides essential information, but should never be viewed as a contest.

SPECIFY CRITICAL ISSUES

The internal and external analyses provide a wealth of information. Now, that input should be analyzed, prioritized, and summarized as critical issues confronting the SEA or LSS. Although the plan addresses a number of matters, these issues are key to development and implementation of the strategic plan. The sample of critical issues below reflects and summarizes information from the internal and external analyses.

Examples of critical issues.

> The student population in _____ School System is becoming more diverse racially and socio-economically. Students come to schools from various backgrounds and cultures. They also possess different academic needs. Presently disparities in achievement levels among student based on race/ethnicity and socio-economic status (SES) exist in the school system. There are also discrepancies in access to opportunities such as technology, Advance Placement, gifted and talented, and magnet programs for some minority students. Though there have been some gains made overtime, the progress of certain minority and lower SES students is not satisfactory and must be addressed systemically.
>
> The school system faces substantial competition from private schools as well as other public school systems. Therefore, it is essential that the school system maintain a reputation of excellence and the highest quality. Public perception of these standards is significantly based on student achievement outcomes.
>
> The teaching staff increasingly comprises a significant number of new or less experienced teachers. In order for the teachers to be most effective in their instruction, they require continuous professional development and coordinated support in curriculum.
>
> The curriculum requires further alignment with local, state, and national standards. Activities in the curriculum also require alignment with the changing instructional indicators.

STEP 4. REVISIT MISSION AND PLANNING POLICIES

Before proceeding to the next step of setting the planning assumptions, this is a good time to pause and review the strategic policies to determine what other limitations or parameters might affect the plan. The information gathered above can also be used to review the mission statement to determine if it adequately reflects the vision and direction of the SEA or LSS.

STEP 5. COMPOSE PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

This phase is sometimes overlooked by planners who consider it rather redundant or rhetorical. However, dialogs that center on developing the assumptions heighten the

process by further clarifying issues from the critical analysis. As an alternative or complement to the summary of critical issues, some planners may choose to elaborate planning assumptions or statements about the current trends in a context that reflects impact on the plan. Planning assumptions can be stated based on internal, external, and competition analyses separately or combined.

- Example of a planning assumption from the internal analysis:

  > "Child-centered" focus must amend established instructional, staffing, and governance frameworks."

- Example of a planning assumption from an external analysis:

  > "New job requirements, including duties and hours, will require changes in existing contractual agreements."

The planning assumptions take the conclusions from the critical analysis to the next level. They form segues into the goals, objectives and strategies.

STEP 6. FORMULATE LONG RANGE GOALS

Long range goals are based on the mission, beliefs and critical issues. These goals are the measurable outcomes that the SEA or local system intends to meet or exceed over the long term. The goals form the basis for development of specific objectives and action plans by departments, offices, and, eventually, schools. Goals should relate to the mission, address critical issues, and lend themselves to measurability. Long range goals should be attainable over an extended period of time. Goals should be differentiated from objectives. Statements about aims of 100% raise in student achievement are usually long range, particularly when students are currently at the 60% level. Goals may be developed and stated based on the "Prediction Action Approach," which emphasizes time, phase, and prediction of performance results. Following is an example of a systemic **goal** stated from the **Prediction Action Approach.**

> "School system will eliminate achievement disparities based on race and gender by the year 2008."

Some planners do not employ long range goals. Instead, they opt to use only objectives that span an extended time period. Other planners use both. When both goals and objectives are used, goals are stated in terms of 3 to 5 years. Objectives may be set at intervals of one year or less.

STEP 7. FORMULATE OBJECTIVES

Below are the characteristics of sound objectives. Objectives should:

- relate to mission statement
- must be result oriented

- must be measurable, demonstrable, or observable in terms of time, money, quality, quantity (Objective must have at least two of the above factors – for example, time and quality – to be valid)
- represent incremental attainment of goals

As with goals, it is essential that objectives are attainable. Therefore, objectives should be incremental and include benchmarks to indicate progress. ESEA with its "Average Yearly Progress" reinforces this approach.

Example:

Successful participation of minority students in SAT, PSAT, and ACT testing will increase by 20% during 2003-2004 school year.

To have 80% of female fifth grade students achieving at satisfactory level on statewide math test by June, 2004.

Participation of minority parents in school governance structure will increase to at least 50% at every school by June 2004.

STEP 8. FORMULATE STRATEGIES

All strategies, regardless of the source, must speak specifically to an objective. Strategies address the results specified in the objectives. Strategies tell how objectives will be met in broad terms and involve the commitment of resources. They detail the means by which the objective(s) and thus the goal will be achieved.

Example:

The school system will develop a sequential, comprehensive curriculum in the math content area.

Provide safe and well-maintained facilities to enhance the learning environments for students.

Consistently implement a common core of research-based instructional practices that will result in more engaging work for students by incorporating student learning styles, learning preferences, brain research, and multiple intelligences.

Strategies should not be confused with objectives. Objectives revolve about desired outcomes; strategies list ways of reaching those results. For example, the following table shows that both the Visionary Panel and Achieve recommend that the state should develop a voluntary statewide curriculum; ESEA requires that the state and LSSs establish reading programs based on scientific kindergarten through grade 3 students; the *Bridge to Excellence Act* mandates that local school systems make pre-Kindergarten programs available for all at-risk children by 2008. These are all strategies. Some planners would erroneously classify these moves as objectives. They are the means of reaching objectives that are client focused.

Next, consider a strategy as "100% of teachers will receive training in education that is multicultural by 2004." Because it is measurable by "100%" and time referenced to "2004," some may consider that statement an objective or a long range goal. However, the statement is more related to process or a strategy to achieve a result rather than result itself. It would have to be backwardly mapped to an objective or goal. For example, the objective statement might be, "All students will receive instruction that is rigorous and aligned with culturally relevant pedagogy by 2004." Clearly, the teacher training is one means of reaching that goal.

Key Strategies comprise the major efforts and initiatives that will be employed throughout the SEA or LSS to accomplish the Long Range Goals. The following pages feature a summary of recommendations and mandates applicable to MSDE and local school systems from the *Visionary Panel*, *Achieve, Incorporated*, *No Child Left Behind*, and the *Bridge to Excellence Act*. (See Appendix B for "Side by Side Analysis," which shows alignment of the four major initiatives.) Many of the items may be considered as key strategies to reach goals and objectives related to increasing achievement among all students and eliminating the achievement gap.

STRATEGIES VS. ACTIONS

The following tables suggest how recommendations and requirements from recent major reports and legislation might be categorized as key strategies or actions. Key actors or agencies are also surmised. The tables demonstrate the difference between strategies and actions. Strategies must be related to goals and objectives, many of which have already been identified in Maryland. (Note: These tables have been constructed for demonstration purposes only.)

Visionary Panel and Achieve Reports

Visionary Panel and Achieve Recommendations	MSDE or LSS	Strategy	Action
• The state should develop a voluntary statewide curriculum for every subject at every grade, K-12. This curriculum will represent the *minimum* content/ skills to be taught. It will be a floor, not a ceiling.	MSDE	•	
• The state should align curriculum, standards, and tests to ensure students are prepared for high school, including the Maryland High School Assessments.	MSDE		•
• The state must move forward with the Maryland High School Assessments and build connections to postsecondary education and employers.	MSDE	•	
• The state should strive to create a "transparent" assessment system that allows educators and the public more access to test items and provides quicker access to test results.	MSDE	•	
• The state should provide individual student results on all assessments.	MSDE		•
• The state should work with school systems to make diagnostic assessments available to schools.	MSDE	•	
• The state must widen the focus of accountability from low-performing schools to all schools.	MSDE	•	
• The state should create short-term (1-to 3-year) performance targets for each school.	MSDE		•
• Based on the progress of all students toward short-term targets and state standards, each school should receive a rating that describes their performance, e.g., "Below Standards, Improving" or "Above standards, Declining."	MSDE		•
• The state should reconstitute failing schools and should offer more supports to a greater number of schools struggling to improve.	MSDE	•	
• The state must make every school accountable for the performance of every child.	MSDE	•	
• Performance designations and rewards should be tied to the performance of all students.	MSDE LSS	•	

• Demand full funding of existing reform plans designed to solve our worst educational problems. This includes Every Child Achieving—the state's PreK-12 Academic Intervention Plan—and the Thornton Commission.	MSDE	•	
• The state must ensure that all teachers are highly qualified (e.g., only certify those teachers who can demonstrate high-level knowledge and teaching skills).	MSDE	•	
• The state should develop a statewide strategy to recruit and retain high-quality teachers.	MSDE	•	
• Provide teachers serious opportunities for advancement that allow them to remain in the classroom.	MSDE LSS	•	
• The state must ensure that the highest quality teachers and principals work in the lowest performing schools.	MSDE LSS	•	
• Establish a pay differential for high-need geographic areas.	MSDE LSS	•	
• The state must lead a shift in the focus of the principal from administration to instruction.	MSDE LSS	•	
• Provide teachers serious opportunities for advancement that allow them to remain in the classroom.	LSS	•	

ESEA – No Child Left Behind Act 2001

ESEA – No Child Left Behind Act 2001	MSDE LSS	Strategy	Action
• Reading First initiative requires state and LSSs to establish reading programs based on scientific research for all children in kindergarten through grade 3.	MSDE LSS	•	
• Reading First has implications for reading programs in Title I elementary schools.	MSDE LSS		•
• Title II-Technology grants require strategies to fully integrate technology into school curricula and instruction, in all schools by December 31, 2006.	MSDE LSS	•	
• MSDE must develop academic standards for all students, in subjects determined by the State. At a minimum, standards must be developed in reading and mathematics, and beginning in school year 2005-2006, science. State's academic achievement standards must align with State's content standards and describe three level of proficiency: Advanced, proficient, and basic.	MSDE	•	
• Title II State application/Consolidated application must describe how state will ensure that Title II activities are aligned with challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards, state assessments, and state and local curricula.	MSDE		•

• Builds on prior Title I assessment provisions and deadlines established in IASA Act of 1994, adding new requirements. Maryland has an approved assessment plan, with waiver for reporting individual student scores (December 2000).	MSDE	•	
• Annual Assessments: Beginning with school year 2005-2006, the state must assess reading/language arts and mathematics annually in grades 3-8, as well as one year in the 10-12 grades.	MSDE	•	
• By school year 2007-2008, the state must administer science assessments annually at least once in grades 3 -5, grades 6 - 9, and grades 10 - 12.	MSDE	•	
• State must report scores in terms of proficiency levels rather than as percentile scores.	MSDE		•
• Beginning with school year 2002-2003, state must annually assess LEP students in their English oral language, reading, and writing skills.	MSDE	•	
• At least 95% of the students enrolled in the state and at least 95% of each major subgroup must participate in the assessments.	MSDE		•
• The assessments must involve multiple, up-to-date measures of student academic achievement, designed to report valid and reliable itemized score analyses, and produce individual student reports	MSDE		•
• Beginning in school year 2002-2003, state must participate in the 4th and 8th grade NAEP reading and mathematics assessments.	MSDE LSS	•	
State Accountability Requirement (State/ Consolidated Plan):			
• State must have a single, statewide accountability system for public and charter schools.	MSDE	•	
• Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP):			
1. All students must reach proficient levels on the state assessments by 2014 (12 yrs).	Long Range Goal		
2. State must establish AYP start point on 2001-2002 achievement data. Set yearly targets to reach 100% goal by 2014, including targets for subgroups.	MSDE		•
3. Achieving those gains for all subgroups constitutes AYP for the state. If even one subgroup fails to meet its AYP objective, the state fails to meet its objective.	Objective		
4. State must define AYP for local school systems and schools based on state assessment, plus -- for elementary schools one additional indicator; for secondary schools, plus graduation rates.	MSDE		•
5. State must have rewards and sanctions for all schools; school improvement and corrective actions for Title I schools.	MSDE	•	

District and School Accountability			
• Schools not making AYP for two consecutive years must provide "public school choice."	LSS	•	
• For schools that do make AYP for three consecutive years, the school system must continue to offer school choice to all students in the failing school and provide low achieving, disadvantaged students within the school supplemental educational services from a provider of their choice. State must develop a list of providers.	MSDE LSS		•
• State defines unsafe schools, gives transfer option to students (Title IX). Teacher Accountability: Title I teachers must be highly qualified no later than the end of the 2005-2006. New Title I teachers must meet this standard beginning 2002-03 school year. MSDE must establish annual measurable objectives for each LSS and school, including an annual increase in the percentage of highly qualified teachers at each LSS and school and an annual increase in the percentage of teachers who are receiving high-quality professional development.	MSDE LSS	•	
• Paraprofessionals (Teacher's Aides): By January 2002, new staff, and by January 2006, all existing aides must have: (1) completed at least two years of study at an institution of higher education; (2) obtained an associate's or higher degree; or (3) met a rigorous standard of quality established at the local level, including an assessment of math, reading, and writing.	MSDE LSS	•	
• Parents have right to know about teacher qualifications.	MSDE LSS		•
• Title II state application/consolidation application must address how the state will use funds to improve the quality of teachers and principals.	MSDE		•
• Under Title II, state must provide technical assistance to LSSs in the development and implementation of their plans and to review annual LSS progress reports. If the LSS is not making progress toward Title II goals and has also failed for 3 consecutive years to make Title I AYP, the LSS must enter into an agreement with state on use of Title II funds.	MSDE LSS	•	

Bridge to Excellence Act

Bridge to Excellence Act Requirements	MSDE LSS	Strategy	Action
• Local school systems must establish full-day Kindergarten by fiscal year 2008.	LSS	•	
Local school systems must make pre-Kindergarten programs available for all at-risk children by fiscal year 2008.	LSS	•	

• Requires each LSS to develop comprehensive plan by October 1, 2003 to ensure achievement of every segment of student population.	LSS	•	
Comprehensive plans must align with state standards, contain implementation strategies, methods for measuring progress and timelines for implementation.	LSS		•
• In its comprehensive plan, each local school system must describe the methods and timelines for measuring improved school performance and student achievement for each segment of student population.	LSS		•
• MSDE to review each school system's comprehensive plan to ensure thoroughness of each plan and to determine compliance with planning criteria.	MSDE		•
• MSDE sets academic standards, ensures needed resources, hold schools and school systems accountable for school performance and academic achievement.	MSDE	•	
• If any segment of student population fails to demonstrate progress MSDE may require changes to its plan.	MSDE		•
• State Board of Education has authority to review and approve allocation of resources in school system that fail to improve student performance or fail to develop satisfactory plans.	MSDE		•

STEP 9. FORMULATE ACTION PLANS

Development of logical action plans is vital to an effective strategic planning process. Below are instructions to assist planners. Strategic planning provides a means for an organization to move from "what it is" to "what it could or should be." Action plans enable this movement. Developing action steps in logical progression and with clear benchmarks for progress to carry out strategies constitutes a most crucial part of the planning process. Essentially, action plans concretize and breath life into the mission and goals of the school system.

Within school systems and agencies, the departments and offices will from Action Planning Teams, which will undertake efforts to make its mission reality. Each department or school should provide an underlying philosophy and rationale, aligning its function with aspects of the school system's or agency's mission. The action plans contain initiatives and programmatic approaches in which the agency or school system will engage during the period of the plan to meet objectives. Significantly, the action plans should also include mechanisms for "built-in" accountability and budgetary considerations. .

1. **Organize Action Planning Teams to develop action plans**. These groups should include inside and outside stakeholders, including individuals from community and business. Numbers of task force members should be based also on maintaining manageability of tasks.

2. **Review all long range goals**. It is possible for action plans to address multiple goals simultaneously.

3. **Review Objectives**.

4. **Review Strategies**.

5. **Construct Action Plans.** Each Action Plan contains:

    1. Statement of long range goal
    2. Statement of objective of plan itself
    3. Specific reference to a strategy
    4. Detailed description of each step
    5. Assignments and responsibilities
    6. Timelines
    7. Benchmarks and evaluation
    8. Indication of Cost and Benefit

6. **Complete Cost Benefit Analysis** should accompany each action plan; may apply at to an individual action or a group of action steps. The cost benefit analysis should include either a projection of approximate budget or at least an indication that there will be associated budget costs.

Cost/ Benefit Considerations	
Cost	Benefits
• Tangible (Budget Projection and Human Resources) • Intangible • Opportunity/Costs	• Tangible • Intangible • Return on investments

Based on table from William Cook's Strategic Planning for America's Schools.

TEMPLATE

Long Range Goal:	Action Plan
Objective:	
Strategy:	

Action Steps	Responsible Person(s)	Start Date	Due Date	Budget/ Cost Benefit	Outcomes/Evaluation/ Comments

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PART II

UNPACKING THE MATRIX
THE PLANNING AGENDA

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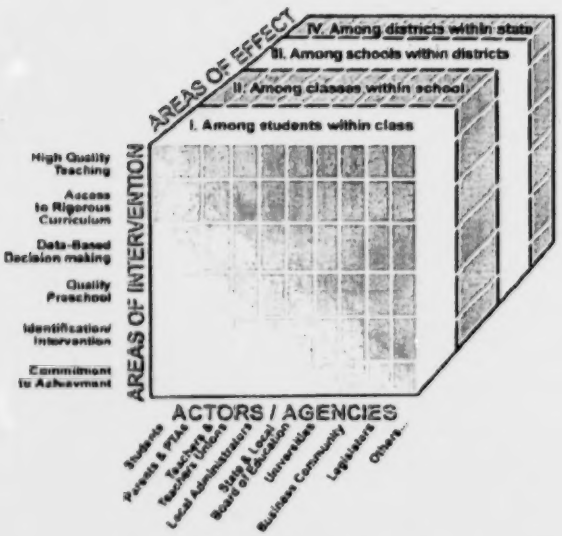
Introduction

Education is entering an era where the demands for accountability related to the work and funding are increasing. Along that same line, the need for the construction of strategically oriented plans becomes increasingly necessary. As the factors that impact educational agencies and schools become more complex, as the students needs become more diverse, it is ever more important that targeted strategies be developed to meet these situations. To assist educators, the Matrix provides a tool to help in the phases of planning – pre, during, and post. First the Matrix helps education and community leaders view the global circumstances and exigencies impacting education and their agencies in a simplified, concise format. The Matrix Framework aids by providing focus on the key areas of interventions, areas of effect, and the role of stakeholders who must address those areas. During the planning process, the Matrix enhances communication and stimulates dialog about key issues that must be attended by planners. The Matrix also provides a structure for the development of such essential planning components as critical analysis, goals, objectives, and strategies. With its emphasis on both macro and micro processes, the Matrix provides built-in links between systemwide and local school planning procedures. Additionally, a macro-matrix developed at the state or systemwide level serves as a guide and rubric to be used by local schools in their planning. This tool also assists planners in evaluation by establishing a context for assessment. It avoids having to shuffle through tens or hundreds of pages of text to find who is doing what and when. The matrix becomes a summary of and a key to the agency's, system's, or school's plan.

The Matrix Approach has not been developed or intended as a prescriptive device. The various uses for the Matrix included in this handbook are suggestions only. Agencies and schools may find these approaches satisfactory or may want to use their own variations. The Matrix generally acts as a thread to furnish consistency and continuity throughout the different segments of the planning discipline. The Matrix functions in a similar way as planning proceeds from the systemwide (macro) to the local school and department (micro) levels. It prevents planners involved at various stages from depending only on their interpretations of factors that drove the planning that preceded them. The Matrix Cube is a very user-friendly tool to provide a variety of publics with graphic portrayal of their roles in the education of children.

Matrix Framework

A Synopsis[1]



The Matrix provides an instrument for focusing, summarizing, and then addressing achievement issues that have become more and more complicated over time. Although the Matrix helps set the action agenda for accelerating achievement among minority students, the action agenda is applicable to all students. Primary among its practical functions, the Matrix promotes positive public relations and enhances communication with all stakeholders. To that end, it clearly specifies the required roles and responsibilities of stakeholders within and outside the organization to obtain common goals. It also becomes a means for concisely informing many publics of the positive direction of the educational agency. Most important, for the Matrix to work effectively, it cannot be treated as a static summary about what an organization or agency currently does. Rather, it must be used as an instrument that helps us gain perspective on where we are and then plan for where we want to be.

In setting the action agenda, the Matrix first shows where we have to see improved results. The Areas of Effect include: (1) the gap between average district minority group performance and the state goal for performance; (2) the difference between a schools's average minority student performance and the district's average minority performance; (3) the difference between the student's class's average minority student performance and the school's average minority performance; and (4) the difference between the individual student's performance and the average performance of others in his or her class. (Again, although the focus is on minority and low SES

[1]For a full description of the Matrix, refer to *Fulfilling the Promise: Action Agenda for Maryland's Minority Students–the Matrix Framework*. This publication is available at www.msde.state.md.us on the Minority Achievement in Maryland webpages.

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students, the concepts are applicable to all students.)

Next, the Matrix focuses on the where to concentrate efforts to obtain desired results, or the Areas of Intervention as detailed here.

- Recruitment, selection, and retention of personnel who can deliver high quality instruction and who can rapidly learn to deploy improved instructional methods. This includes initially well prepared and continually re-prepared (re-trained) teachers and administrators.
- Equitable and wide-spread access to appropriate high-level educational opportunities
- Data-based feedback on educational outcomes for all students at all levels of educational systems.
- Quality preschool preparation for school.
- Identification and intervention when any student falls behind expected educational progress.
- Students, parents, teachers, administrators, board members, and legislators are committed to high levels of academic achievement for all groups of students.

The Matrix, as shown in Tables 1 and 2, helps us identify the roles of individuals or groups who must participate in order to accomplish the desired outcomes – the Actors or Agencies. Alignment of efforts to generate high achievement among Maryland's minority students occurs when multiple actors are all doing their part with respect to each domain (quality personnel, equitable high-level opportunity, etc.) and when progress is being made in each domain at each level of education (classroom, school, district, and state). Overall, the Framework assists in expediting necessary actions to address achievement. The Matrix furnishes a portal into the actualization of reform paradigms essential for education now and into the future.

Information accumulated in the Matrix table assists in a variety of ways during planning and makes planning easier. Developing a matrix helps in establishing the guidance system for the planning process. By reviewing the completed matrix cells, planners can conduct a review of the mission and beliefs statements for relevancy. (See Tables 1 and 2, pgs. 6-10.) The tables give a dose of reality that helps set up planning policies and parameters that guide that for which we will or will not plan. As planners, we can more readily distinguish that which is within as well as beyond our control. Next, the Matrix table is useful in identifying what the agency or school system is doing well or strengths; what needs improvement or weaknesses; as well as opportunities and threats. In planning, this component is referred to as the critical analysis of conditions impacting the mission of the school system from within and without.

Just completing the Matrix table requires acknowledgment of these areas. The cells in the table can help us develop and refine goals as well as objectives and strategies. The table and its cells form a structure on which to base action plans that, just as the cells indicate roles and responsibilities, detail who will do what and when to realize the strategies and reach objectives and ultimate goals. The Matrix Framework table provides a concise picture and exposes gaps in planning and services as well as lack of quality control by key actors. Gaps or blank cells can also

indicate roots for dysfunction or disequilibrium in the organization regarding its mission. Gaps in the table can help predict needs and determine priorities. As stated previously, the Matrix is an organizational tool that can serve multiple purposes as a preface to planning as well during planning and implementation. Its exact use depends on how the agency or school system feels it serves best.

Table 1

The Concerted Efforts of Many Different Actors are Required in the Achievement Initiative for Maryland's Minority Students

	Participant										
Approach to enhancing minority achievement	Students	Parents and PTAs	Teachers and teachers' unions	School principals and other local administrators	Local and state boards of education and CACs	State administrators	Teacher training institutions	Research institutions	Courts	Legislators	Faith community and business community
Quality personnel and instruction	Treat educators with respect.	Advocate and vote for personnel resources.	Work to develop reforms to staff low performing schools with quality educators.	Select and supervise teachers. Assign best teachers where needed most.	Select administrators dedicated to improving minority achievement.	Promulgate regulations, seek funding, lead parties to consensus on staffing reforms.	Select and retain talented students and prepare them to educate a diverse population.	Publish research on teacher selection and effective practices.	Adjudicate in cases alleging inequity in access to quality personnel.	Establish programs to attract teachers in areas with poor selection ratios.	Major industries share expertise in personnel recruitment & selection with schools.
Equitable high-level opportunity	Plan for, prepare selves for, and enroll in high-level courses.	Advise their children to tackle tough courses; advocate for childrens' placement.	Treat students equitably in classes and access to classes. Prepare self to teach high level material.	Treat students equitably in access to classes. Recruit personnel who can deliver high level instruction.	Demand equitable access to advanced instruction.	Hold LEAs accountable for equitable access and provision of high level instruction.	Through initial and programs of continuing study prepare teachers serving minority populations for AP instruction.	Conduct research on equity of access to GT and AP courses.	Adjudicate in cases alleging inequity in access to advanced courses.	Fund training for educators to deliver high level courses. Legislate on equity of access.	Conduct teach-ins on current inequities.
Feedback on outcomes	Participate whole heartedly in assessment programs. Analyze implications of results for own learning.	Review own child's progress; help child plan for advance-ment.	Analyze assessment results to identify where instructional changes would be beneficial. Support innovative accountabili-ty systems.	Analyze assessment results as part of performance review for staff and to identify areas where instructional changes would be beneficial.	Include assessment of minority achievement in review of administra-tors' perfor-mance.	Promote the availability of appropriate assessment materials and programs. Devise useful test feedback system.	Evaluate teacher training programs in terms of educational outcomes of students taught by alumni.	Develop improved ways of analyzing outcomes. Devise ways to evaluate instructors and schools in relation to expected educational growth.	Adjudicate in cases alleging persistent failure to improve educational outcomes for minorities.	Pass legislation (with funding) for assessment programs tracking individual progress and linking it with teachers and classes experienced.	Sponsor events in which assessment data become the focus of community planning to improve education.

Note. Cell entries are illustrative and are not intended to be definitive or exhaustive.

Continued

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Table 1 (Continued)

Approach to enhancing minority achievement	Participant: Students	Parents and PTAs	Teachers and teachers' unions	School principals and other local administrators	Local and state boards of education and CACs	State administrators	Teacher training institutions	Research institutions	Courts	Legislators	Faith community and business community
Teacher preparation and re-training			Diligently learn classroom management and instructional methods.	Arrange for periodic continuing education in areas of need.	Require continuing education in multicultural education and in areas of instructional need.		Train beginning teachers for managing instruction in hetero-*genous* groups and to provide advanced instruction in areas of need.	Conduct process and outcome evaluations of training interven-*tions to* determine if they enhance minority achieve-ment.		Create scholarship programs, training programs, focused on preparing teachers to instruct economi-cally handicapped or minority students.	Develop recognition programs for outstanding examples of teacher preparation and re-training.
Preschool preparation		Meet the health, mental health, and cognitive needs of children. Develop emergent literacy skills.	Advocate for quality preschool programs.	Administer preschool programs focusing on early educational readiness of minority children.			Train preschool educators to introduce literacy skills to minority or poor children.	Conduct process and outcome evaluations of preschool programs to determine if they enhance minority achieve-ment.	Adjudicate in cases of alleged inequity in access to preschool programs.	Fund preschool programs for minority or economi-cally handicapped children.	Develop and implement high quality preschool programs focused on pre-literacy skills and integrating health screening.

Note. Cell entries are illustrative and are not intended to be definitive or exhaustive.

Continued . . .

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Table 1 (Continued)

	Participant									
Identification and intervention	Ask for help with educational difficulties.	Request assessment of children when difficulties are suspected.	Apply diagnostic processes that distinguish learning disabilities from cultural differences. Conduct instruction matched to diverse student needs.	Review assessment results child by child to identify those who may need intervention.	Require main-streamed educational inter-ventions for children with special needs.		Train future educators in skills needed to meet diverse student needs in regular or accelerated classes.	Evaluate identification and intervention programs (including special education) to learn effects on minority achieve-ment.	Ensure sufficient funding for training teachers in identifica-tion and intervention to accelerate minority achieve-ment.	Use preschool and faith-related early education as vehicles for early behavioral health screening for children.
Commitment to achievement	Set specific difficult achievement goals, make and execute plans to improve achieve-ment. Support a climate of commitment to education.	Reward students for achieve-ment, school attendance, and good school conduct. Encourage high educational goals.	Assist students in setting and achieving difficult goals. Provide incentives for progress towards goals.	Assist teachers and schools set specific, difficult goals for minority achieve-ment. Reward teachers and schools for approaching goals.	Require schools and districts to set specific difficult goals for minority achieve-ment.	Assist districts with a process for setting their own specific difficult goals for minority achieve-ment.	Instill in students enthusiasm for the pursuit of high achievement for minority and economi-cally disadvantage d students.	Conduct research on the process of organization al goal setting and achieve-ment. Study the relation between student, teacher, and educator commitment and student educational outcomes.	Emphasize teachings related to personal commitment and effort as an investment of one's talents.	

Note. Cell entries are illustrative and are not intended to be definitive or exhaustive.

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Table 2
Different Actors or Change Agents Have Special Roles in Addressing Different Components of Achievement Shortfalls

	Source of discrepancy between performance and standard			
Agent	Among students within classes	Among classes within schools	Among schools within districts	Among districts within state
Students	Expenditure effort	Course selections (advanced/general)		
Parents and PTAs	Communication and follow-up with teachers		Choices of residential location; school selection	Choices of residential location
Teachers and teachers' unions	Instructional methods/skills	Teacher competencies; priorities for teaching assignments	Negotiations on rules for assignment and mobility among schools	Encouragement of pay incentives for service in under-served communities
Local administrators	Staff development in methods for instruction of heterogeneous classes	Teacher and student assignments; supervision of teaching personnel	Development of strategies to ensure equitable staffing of schools	
State and local boards of education		Policies regarding tracking, special education, and GT assignments	Resource allocations; assignment of administrators across schools	Resource allocations; policies regarding equity and staffing quality
State administrators	Accountability and monitoring systems	Accountability and monitoring systems	Accountability and monitoring systems	Resource allocation; incentives and sanctions; accountability and monitoring systems
Teacher training institutions	Preparation of teachers for coping with heterogeneous classes of students	Quality control level of preparation of graduates		Recruitment and admission of students from under-served areas
Research institutions	Develop improved methods of instruction for all students	Research on within-school stratification of educational outcomes; improved methods of input-output analysis	Research on sources of school performance differences; improved methods of input-output analysis	Research on sources of between district differences in educational performance

Note. Cell entries are illustrative and are not intended to be definitive or exhaustive.

Continued . . .

Table 2 (Continued)

Agent	Source of discrepancy between performance and standard			
	Among students within classes	Among classes within schools	Among schools within districts	Among districts within state
Courts	Adjudication of cases alleging disparate treatment	Adjudication of cases alleging disparate treatment	Adjudication of cases alleging disparate treatment	Adjudication of cases alleging disparate treatment
Legislators				Provision for equitable funding
Faith and business communities	After school educational assistance programs	Teach-ins regarding educational inequities	Teach-ins regarding educational inequities; lobbying for equitable resources	Teach-ins regarding educational inequities; lobbying for equitable resources

Note. Cell entries are illustrative and are not intended to be definitive or exhaustive.

Continued . . .

PART III

THE MATRIX AND PLANNING

"Planning is what you do before you do something, so that when you do it, it's not all mixed up."

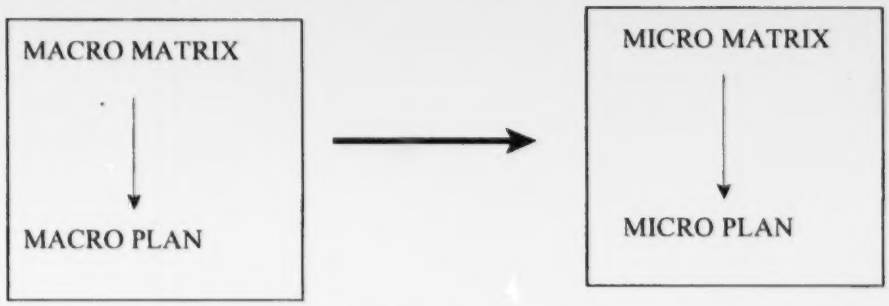
Winnie the Pooh

Macro to Micro – Matrix to Plan

Plans often comprise hefty documents. When presented by themselves as finished products, middle managers and staff are frequently left little alternative other than to just scour the document to look for what applies to them and then begin to develop their action plans in relative isolation. One of the main detriments to any plan being actualized is the lapse in communication within an organization related to the plan and the planning process. Too frequently, organizational plans are developed in committee, and aside from the individuals actually involved in that work, the rest of the organization sees only a relatively finished product – the plan. There may remain little hint of true intent of the process or incentive for buy-in by those who have to perform the implementation.. Rather, the plan may be misinterpreted as a grand directive or list of things to do. The logical questions for anyone viewing a plan are, "Where am I in this? What do I have to do? Why will I be doing it?" If there is no mechanism to help form these vital connections, subsequent dialogs, which could be directed to the next stages of planning or implementation, becoming time-consuming sessions concentrated on explaining the plan and deriving a rationale for each component. The matrix provides a mechanism to prevent this problem.

As discussed earlier, there should be explicit connections among the various levels of planning. At this point, the concept of development of macro and micro matrices to lead to corresponding types of plans proves useful. The starting point, of course is the master or macro matrix. This is the overall matrix for the organization. The macro matrix assists in the development of the state education agency or local school system-wide strategic plan. The macro matrix then functions as an effective communication tool for further planning at other levels. This matrix is useful here because it simultaneously captures the global picture, shows the interrelationship of roles among the multiple stakeholders, and targets the areas of intervention. In addition, inclusion of a matrix provides staff and other planners with a feeling of genuine involvement in the planning process and a basis for formulating their departmental or site based (school) plans. Next, as the central management developed a macro matrix prior to the produce the macro plan for the organization, each department or school should use that macro matrix to develop its own micro matrix and then plan. As the diagram below indicates, this approach concretizes a context for planning by enhancing the connection in content and the fluidity of the planning process.

Regarding planning within local school systems, schools, and departments, the Matrix may be used as a background tool for both system level, central office, and school-based planning. The Macro-Matrix phase is led by the Superintendent or his/her designee. It involves preparation of a Matrix that is core to the entire school system and includes issues that are evident throughout the system in general. This macro matrix is devised using input from various stakeholders and has the most global view. The Macro- Matrix should not consume excessive time for development. It provides a guide and coordination mechanism, for schools and individual central offices as they participate in developing their Micro-Matrixes. Office plans and school improvement plans may be guided by the process and content of Macro-Matrix. Moreover, using this approach maintains logical relationships between different planning components at various stages.

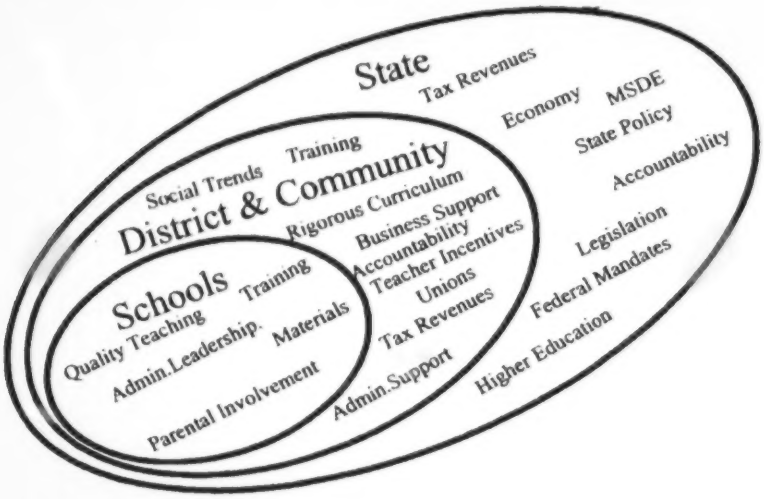


ORGANIZATION
SYSTEMWIDE

DEPARTMENT (OFFICE)
SCHOOL

Using the Matrix for Planning

As a tool, the Matrix Framework may be used to enhance the planning processes by providing a simplified context in which to consider complex factors and variables that impact the organization within and without.



Based on concept © Dr. Joe A. Hairston

The Matrix is useful during pre-planning and the actual planning. At the pre-planning stage, compiling the Matrix tables enables us to condense information about crucial factors that must be addressed in order to accelerate student achievement. The process of developing the Matrix table in itself encourages discussion about many objectives and strategies that will positively impact achievement and the operation of the organization. This process also enables us to prioritize issues as well as consider ways in which to align strategies with factors such as community needs, federal mandates, and state planning requirements.

Pre-planning

- **Encapsulates Big Picture**
- **Captures Exigencies**
- **Reinforces Alignment**
- **Summarizes Stakeholders'**

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The Matrix, when used as a preface and a reference during the actual planning, intensifies the alignment of the resources, strategies, and actors. In other words, it captures implicitly and explicitly the state of affairs in a simple manner and enables the use of that information to strategically plan for optimum outcomes. The Matrix helps planners gain perspective on plans, before, during and after the actual planning process. Too frequently, production of the plan becomes an end in itself, subsuming that for which the plan is intended. In fact, plans sometimes fail due to missing links inherent in either the planning discipline or the process. The Matrix helps assure that those links are attended through the matrix cells.

The Matrix Framework helps bring focus to the whole and it parts at once – from preparing to plan through plan evaluation.. The Framework aids us as we set priorities for goals and objectives. A finished matrix provides a snap shot of the conditions of a local system or a school. It can also serve as a brainstorming device as well as a stimulant for dialog in identifying cogent information to include in a strategic plan. Developing a matrix as a preface to planning aids throughout the remainder of the process. The Matrix, by its very nature, provides a rationale for strategies and actions in the plan. As a foundation for planning, it avoids plunging stakeholders into the quagmire of searching the plan for their roles. It shows potential activities in the context of their inter-relationship to one another as well as to the mission and goals of the organization. At its simplest level, the Matrix provides an anchor by linking objectives and strategies with specified areas of intervention. The following figure illustrates how the Matrix Framework relates to planning components.

The Matrix and Strategic Plan Components

MATRIX PLANNING ACTIVITIES

The following pages contain activities that provide a sampling of ways in which the Matrix Framework can be used to assist in planning.

Activity 1: Identifying Actors, Agents, and Roles

Directions: Different Actors or Change Agents play specialized roles in addressing disparities between performance and standards experienced by minority or any other students. Complete the table below by indicating in the appropriate cells by listing the role(s) or responsibilities of Local or State Central Office Staff to close the gaps in the listed Areas of Effect. (Table 2 may be used as a guide for this activity.)

Area of Effect: Source of Disparity

AGENT

	Among Students within Schools	Among Schools within District
CENTRAL OFFICE		

Activity 2: The Matrix and Critical Analysis

The Matrix can serve as a diagnostic tool when looking at conditions in the school system. This segment of planning is referred to as internal/external analysis or critical analysis. At this point the agency or school system looks at its strength, weaknesses, and opportunities to improve, potential threats from within and without the organization related to accomplishing its mission, in this case achievement for all students. The Matrix brings focus to this procedure. Some organizations perform this vital activity by sending out memos to staff and community that ask generalized questions such as "What do you consider to be our strengths and weaknesses as a school system?" The responses often cover the spectrum from the cogently relevant to the absolutely irrelevant. Just dealing with this type of non-specific data can become a chore in itself, consuming time and energy. Thus, the Matrix functions as a tool early-on to assist at the staff level in preliminarily gathering this cogent information.

Area of Effect

Area of Intervention

Among Schools within System

Quality classroom teachers

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats

Activity 3: The Matrix and Critical Analysis

During planning, it is vital to conduct an a critical analysis that encompasses factors from the internal as well as external environment, which will affect accomplishment of an organization's mission and goals from the internal as well as external environment. This part of planning process focuses on identifying strengths and weakness from within the organization (internal) and then in relationship to the wider community of stakeholders (external). It is important that this activity not become an exercise in labeling "what's good or bad" about an educational agency or school. Factors are classified according to strengths and weakness so that they may addressed where necessary or appropriately in the plan. Ergo, both strengths and weaknesses may reflect opportunities for improvement.

The "Internal Analysis" examines in the inner-workings of the school system in relationship to its vision, mission, and goals. This planning component focuses on factors that impact the organization internally via staff, clients, community stakeholders, and resource inputs. The following two tables demonstrate means of accumulating information for an internal analysis. In the first table, "Internal Analysis by Degrees," strengths and weaknesses are diagnosed for level of intensity. (Examples of possible cell entries are included in the table for demonstration purposes only.) The second table, "Areas of Intervention: Internal Analysis," employs a similar approach but uses categories from the Matrix. It is important to note that neither method is exclusive of the other. In fact both may be used to capture a definitive picture.

Directions: This activity looks at an important part of the planning process for any school system or state education agency – the identification of where it is strong on the inside as well as in relation to the community it serves. We are going to use two methods. Neither method is exclusive of the other. The first approach uses the typical, mandatory "focus areas," and the second approach uses "areas of intervention" consistent with the matrix. What is unique about both approaches is that we have to not only identify strengths and weaknesses, we have to place them on a gradient that suggests levels of strength and weakness. Together the two methods provide planners with a comprehensive analysis from different perspectives.

To begin, take a couple of minutes to review the descriptions of the various "Areas of Intervention" on the sheet "**Framework" for the Achievement Initiative for Maryland's Minority Students."**

Now, add some entries to the first table, **"Internal Analysis by Degrees**," being sure to place those entries in the appropriate cells indicating levels of strength or weakness.

When done, turn attention to the second table, **"Matrix Areas of Intervention: Internal Analysis,"** and add some entries. The major difference in this table is that it uses "Areas of Intervention" from the Matrix Framework.

Next, add some entries to the cells in the second table. Information from the first table may used here also.

"Framework" for the Achievement Initiative for Maryland's Minority Students[1]

The topics above represent key areas of intervention to address in order to eliminate gaps enhance achievement among all students. The list includes broad topics to stimulate thought and specification related by an educational agency, local system or school. Goals for the optimum educational results for students are implicit in each indicated area.

Essentially, we will improve academic achievement for Maryland's minority students, increase the proportion of members of all groups who are high achievers, and approach educational equity if we are able to put in place *all* of the following:

1. ***Recruitment, selection, and retention of personnel who can deliver high quality instruction and who can rapidly learn to deploy improved instructional methods.*** The recruitment, selection and retention of high quality teachers is especially problematic in schools serving minority and less affluent populations where we observe such things as low ratios of applicants to hires and the voluntary transfer of teachers out of such schools.

2. ***Equitable and wide-spread access to appropriate high-level educational opportunities.*** All students, regardless of race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic background, or disability must be assured access to rigorous and appropriate curriculum and instruction. We must increase the number of minority youths participating in gifted and talented programs at all levels and enrolled in advanced placement courses in high schools. Disparities in access to advanced mathematics and other courses that prepare students for college and careers requiring complex skills must be eliminated.

3. ***Data-based feedback on educational outcomes for all students at all levels of educational systems.*** Educators at all levels should set goals for the educational outcomes of *all groups* of students and use information from achievement assessments to monitor progress for students of all ethnic groups and of both sexes. Assessment data should be used to identify the strengths and weaknesses of educational systems, schools, and individual teachers' practices and used to improve these systems, schools, and practices.

4. ***Initially well prepared and continually re-prepared (re-trained) teachers and administrators.*** To provide high quality instructional services to students of all of Maryland's ethnic groups, educators must not only be initially well prepared as a result of formal education, but they will require ongoing professional development to prepare them to serve the state's increasingly diverse population.

5. ***Quality preschool preparation for school.*** Ethnic minority students and children from economically disadvantaged families should no longer start school with an educational disadvantage. High quality preschool preparation, including attention to language and cognitive development, behavioral health, nutrition, and other aspects of physical health – with a focus on economically disadvantaged minority children – will set the stage for high achievement in

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[1]AIMMS Steering Committee, Revised May 2, 2002.

subsequent years.

6. ***Identification and intervention when any student falls behind expected educational progress***. Frequent assessments of educational progress should be used identify individuals who are not performing up to their potentials with respect to achievement, attendance, or school performance – with appropriate interventions applied in a timely fashion. Diagnostic processes should distinguish learning disabilities from cultural differences so that inappropriate assignment of ethnic minorities to special education categories is avoided and so that minority achievement is accelerated by learning interventions.

7. ***Students, parents, teachers, administrators, board members, and legislators are committed to high levels of academic achievement for all groups of students***. The mechanisms that will lead to high levels of achievement for Maryland's minority students – and indeed for all of our students – are complex. High achievement requires hard work, students must dedicate themselves to educational effort over a period of many years. This requires each young person to adopt the personal identity of serious scholar and to set ambitious personal standards for effort and the quality of educational performances. Parents must consistently encourage their children to aim for high educational achievement – not only in the long run but also in their day-to-day undertakings. Regardless of background or level of economic resources, every family must attend to young peoples' educational effort and reward effort with approval. Teachers must resolve that the minority children they teach will achieve at high levels in their classes and conduct their instruction so that this resolve is realized in student outcomes. Administrators must be committed to increasing the achievement of minority and economically disadvantaged students, lead schools and school systems in planning for greater achievement, arrange necessary training for staff, and regularly supervise personnel to see that they are implementing instruction and other activities to bring about the achievement goals. Board members must express their commitment to minority achievement in selecting and overseeing the work of administrators, and in allocating resources to schools and programs. The challenge of eliminating disparities in educational outcomes is great, and it will not be overcome without resolution and resources. We must be able to count on state policy makers and legislators to demand equity, to provide the resources needed to implement all of the above, and to align the efforts of everyone on our common goal.

Internal Analysis by Degrees
Major Internal Strengths and Weaknesses

Focus Area	Strengths	←	→	Weaknesses
Students		Diverse student population	Wider range of special needs	
Faculty/Staff				
Parents/Community				
Governance/ Administration				
Instruction				
Fiscal Resources and Support	Established budget process			
Physical Infrastructure				Maintenance backlog

Matrix Areas of Intervention: Internal Analysis

Area of Intervention	Strengths	←	→	Weaknesses
Quality Personnel and Instruction (Recruitment, Retention, Training)				
Equitable High Level Opportunity (Access to Rigorous and Appropriate Curriculum)				
Feed Back On Outcomes (Data-Based Decision Making)				
Quality Preschool				
Identification and intervention				
Commitment to Achievement				

Activity 4: The Matrix and Developing Strategies

The Matrix Table (see blank Table 1, page) helps us brainstorm to consider strategies or reconsider approaches that have been tried without success to obtain objectives and goals. Just as objectives follow goals, strategies are based on specific objectives. If not handled correctly, developing strategies becomes more like composing a To Do List. The following activity is intended to expedite decisions about the potential of strategies. This activity is about using components of the Matrix to develop strategies to prepare for action planning. Before starting, refer to the document *"Matrix Table Framework for Central Office."* For this activity, also refer to Table 1 earlier in this handbook. Many of the cells in that table show strategies to be pursued to increase achievement. Also refer to the **"Definitions and Examples"** sheet. This activity can help planners to arrive at strategies that central office staff or other actors can formulate to address achievement disparities.

Matrix Framework: Developing Strategies

Directions: Compose one or more strategies for each Area of Intervention to accomplish the following objective. "70% percent of all 8th grade African American students will score at satisfactory or better in MSPAP mathematics by June, 2004." Refer to "Definitions" sheet for examples of strategy statements.

High Quality Teaching/Quality personnel and instruction	
Access to Rigorous Curriculum/ Equitable high-level opportunity	
Data-Based Decision Making/ Feedback on Outcomes	
Quality Pre-school/ Early Learning Interventions	
Identification, Intervention/	
Commitment to Achievement	

Activity 5: Unpacking the Matrix

This activity involves unpacking the Matrix into a preliminary stage prior to action planning. In the real world, this activity would be completed by a task force, committee, particular office, or department. Please use the *"Unpacking the Matrix"* form. For this practice, the Area of Effect is always "Among Schools within a District," and the Actor/Agent is always "Central Office Administration." Select an area(s) of intervention and then complete each segment accordingly. To save time you may refer again to the "**Matrix Framework Table**" and to the "**Definitions**" page from the preceding activity.

Unpacking the Matrix

Area of Effect:	Among schools within district
Area of Intervention:	
Actors/Agency(s):	Central Office Administration

Objective:
Strategy:
Critical Benchmark (What key decision, agreement, or action is necessary to move forward with the strategy?) :
Data Monitoring (How and what will be measured):
Resources (Fiscal, Physical, and Human):
Obstacles:

APPENDIX
A

Letter and Form for Stakeholder Input

The following letter to external stakeholders is short and to the point. In addition it is reader friendly to include as many stakeholders as possible.

Letter from Superintendent

Dear (Community, Business Leader)

Maintaining quality public education in _____ County is a major priority. The education of our students impacts the lives of residents now and in the future. Currently, we are developing a strategic plan to guide the school system in our service to you for the next five years. An important component of the planning involves getting feedback from stakeholders. Therefore, we are asking you to assist us by completing the attached form that asks your opinions about the school system. Your responses will help us in our efforts to provide the best education possible for our students. Thank you for your cooperation.

Stakeholder Survey

The information you provide on this survey will help in the development of a plan for the _____ School System. Please complete the sections below based on your what you know about the school system. Use the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope to return the completed survey to school system headquarters.

1. List below what you consider to be the strengths of Baltimore County Public Schools.

2. List below what you consider to be the weaknesses of Baltimore County Public Schools.

3. What do you feel are the most important issues that should be considered in planning for the future of Baltimore County Public Schools?

APPENDIX
B

SUMMARY OF SIDE-BY-SIDE ANALYSIS OF VISIONARY PANEL FOR BETTER SCHOOLS, ACHIEVE, INC., AND NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND, AND BRIDGE TO EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS ACT FOR INTEGRATED STRATEGIC PLANNING

	Visionary Panel Achievement Matters Most	Achieve, Inc. Aiming Higher	ESEA – No Child Left Behind Act of 2001	Bridge to Excellence In Public Schools Act
CURRICULUM	• The state should develop a voluntary statewide curriculum for every subject at every grade, K-12. This curriculum will represent the *minimum* content/ skills to be taught. It will be a floor, not a ceiling.	• The state should coordinate an effort to develop a voluntary statewide curriculum to ensure that schools have access to rigorous, proven curriculum.	• Reading First initiative requires state and LSSs to establish reading programs based on scientific research for all children in kindergarten through grade 3. • Reading First has implications for reading programs in Title I elementary schools. • Title II-Technology grants require strategies to fully integrate technology into school curricula and instruction, in all schools by December 31, 2006.	• Local school systems must establish full-day Kindergarten by fiscal year 2008. • Local school systems must make pre-Kindergarten programs available for all at-risk children by fiscal year 2008.

Side by Side Table developed by MSDE.

	Visionary Panel Achievement Matters Most	Achieve, Inc. Aiming Higher	ESEA – No Child Left Behind Act of 2001	Bridge to Excellence In Public Schools Act
ALIGNMENT	• The state should align curriculum, standards, and tests to ensure students are prepared for high school, including the Maryland High School Assessments.	• The state should align curriculum, standards, and tests.	• MSDE must develop academic standards for all students, in subjects determined by the State. At a minimum, standards must be developed in reading and mathematics, and beginning in school year 2005-2006, science. State's academic achievement standards must align with State's content standards and describe three level of proficiency: Advanced, proficient, and basic. • Title II State application/Consolidated application must describe how state will ensure that Title II activities are aligned with challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards, state assessments, and state and local curricula.	• Requires each LSS to develop comprehensive plan by October 1, 2003 to ensure achievement of every segment of student population. • Comprehensive plans must align with state standards, contain implementation strategies, methods for measuring progress and timelines for implementation.
ASSESSMENT	• The state should provide individual student results on all assessments. • The state should work with school systems to make diagnostic assessments available to schools.	• The state should provide individual student results on all assessments. • The state should work with school systems to make diagnostic assessments available to schools. • The state should strive to create a "transparent" assessment system that allows educators and the public more access to test items and provides quicker access to test results. • The state must move forward with the Maryland High School Assessments and build connections to postsecondary education and employers.	• Builds on prior Title I assessment provisions and deadlines established in IASA Act of 1994, adding new requirements. Maryland has an approved assessment plan, with waiver for reporting individual student scores (December 2000). • Annual Assessments: Beginning with school year 2005-2006, the state must assess reading/language arts and mathematics annually in grades 3-8, as well as one year in the 10-12 grades. • By school year 2007-2008, the state must administer science assessments annually at least once in grades 3 -5, grades 6 - 9, and grades 10 - 12. • State must report scores in terms of proficiency levels rather than as percentile scores. • Beginning with school year 2002-2003, state must annually assess LEP students in their English oral language, reading, and writing skills. • At least 95% of the students enrolled in the sate and at least 95% of each major subgroup must participate in the assessments. • The assessments must involve multiple, up-to-date measures of student academic achievement, designed to report valid and reliable itemized score analyses, and produce individual student reports • Beginning in school year 2002-2003, state must participate in the 4th and 8th grade NAEP reading and mathematics assessments.	• In its comprehensive plan, each local school system must describe the methods and timelines for measuring improved school performance and student achievement for each segment of student population.

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	Visionary Panel Achievement Matters Most	Achieve, Inc. Aiming Higher	ESEA – No Child Left Behind Act of 2001	Bridge to Excellence In Public Schools Act
ACCOUNTABILITY	• The state must widen the focus of accountability from low-performing schools to all schools. • The state should create short-term (1-to 3-year) performance targets for each school. • Based on the progress of all students toward short-term targets and state standards, each school should receive a rating that describes their performance, e.g., "Below Standards, Improving" or "Above standards, Declining." • The state should reconstitute failing schools and should offer more supports to a greater number of schools struggling to improve. • The state must make every school accountable for the performance of every child. • Performance designations and rewards should be tied to the performance of all students.	• The state must widen the focus of accountability from low-performing schools to all schools. • Every school should have improvement targets. • Based on the progress of all students toward short-term targets and state standards, each school should receive a rating that describes their performance. • The state must make every school accountable for the performance of every child. • Performance designations and rewards should be tied to the performance of all students.	<u>State Accountability Requirement (State/ Consolidated Plan):</u> • State must have a single, statewide accountability system for public and charter schools. • <u>Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP):</u> 1. All students must reach proficient levels on the state assessments by 2014 (12 yrs). 2. State must establish AYP start point on 2001-2002 achievement data. Set yearly targets to reach 100% goal by 2014, including targets for subgroups. 3. Achieving those gains for all subgroups constitutes AYP for the state. If even one subgroup fails to meet its AYP objective, the state fails to meet its objective. 4. State must define AYP for local school systems and schools based on state assessment, plus -- for elementary schools one additional indicator; for secondary schools, plus graduation rates. 5. State must have rewards and sanctions for all schools; school improvement and corrective actions for Title I schools. <u>District and School Accountability</u> • Schools not making AYP for two consecutive years must provide "public school choice." • For schools that do make AYP for three consecutive years, the school system must continue to offer school choice to all students in the failing school and provide low achieving, disadvantaged students within the school supplemental educational services from a provider of their choice. State must develop a list of providers. • State defines unsafe schools, gives transfer option to students (Title IX).	• MSDE to review each school system's comprehensive plan to ensure thoroughness of each plan and to determine compliance with planning criteria. • MSDE sets academic standards, ensures needed resources, hold schools and school systems accountable for school performance and academic achievement. • If any segment of student population fails to demonstrate progress MSDE may require changes to its plan. • State Board of Education has authority to review and approve allocation of resources in school system that fail to improve student performance or fail to develop satisfactory plans.

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TEACHER PREPARATION/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	• The state must ensure that all teachers are highly qualified (e.g., only certify those teachers who can demonstrate high-level knowledge and teaching skills). • The state should develop a statewide strategy to recruit and retain high-quality teachers. • The state must ensure that the highest quality teachers and principals work in the lowest performing schools. • Establish a pay differential for high-need geographic areas. • The state must lead a shift in the focus of the principal from administration to instruction.	• The state must ensure that all teachers are highly qualified (e.g., only certify only those teachers who can demonstrate high-level knowledge and teaching skills). • The state should develop a statewide strategy to recruit and retain high-quality teachers. • The state must ensure that the highest quality teachers and principals work in the lowest performing schools. • Establish a pay differential for high-need geographic and subject areas. • Provide teachers serious opportunities for advancement that allow them to remain in the classroom.	• Teacher Accountability: Title I teachers must be highly qualified no later than the end of the 2005-2006. New Title I teachers must meet this standard beginning 2002-03 school year. MSDE must establish annual measurable objectives for each LSS and school, including an annual increase in the percentage of highly qualified teachers at each LSS and school and an annual increase in the percentage of teachers who are receiving high-quality professional development. • Paraprofessionals (Teacher's Aides): By January 2002, new staff, and by January 2006, all existing aides must have: (1) completed at least two years of study at an institution of higher education; (2) obtained an associate's or higher degree; or (3) met a rigorous standard of quality established at the local level, including an assessment of math, reading, and writing. • Parents have right to know about teacher qualifications. • Title IX provides definitions of highly qualified teacher ad qualifications and duties of paraprofessionals. • Title II state application/consolidation application must address how the state will use funds to improve the quality of teachers and principals. • Under Title II, state must provide technical assistance to LSSs in the development and implementation of their plans and to review annual LSS progress reports. If the LSS is not making progress toward Title II goals and has also failed for 3 consecutive years to make Title I AYP, the LSS must enter into an agreement with state on use of Title II funds.	

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FUNDING	• Demand full funding of existing reform plans designed to solve our worst educational problems. This includes Every Child Achieving—the state's PreK-12 Academic Intervention Plan—and the Thornton Commission.	No provision	• Increases federal funding for Title I and other ESEA programs to support high achievement for all students.	• Restructures state school finance system and increase state aid to schools by $1.3 billion over six years. • Creates formula for equity and adequacy by linking resources to needs of students, provides 76% of state aid in an inverse relationship to wealth.

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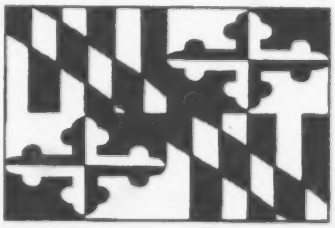

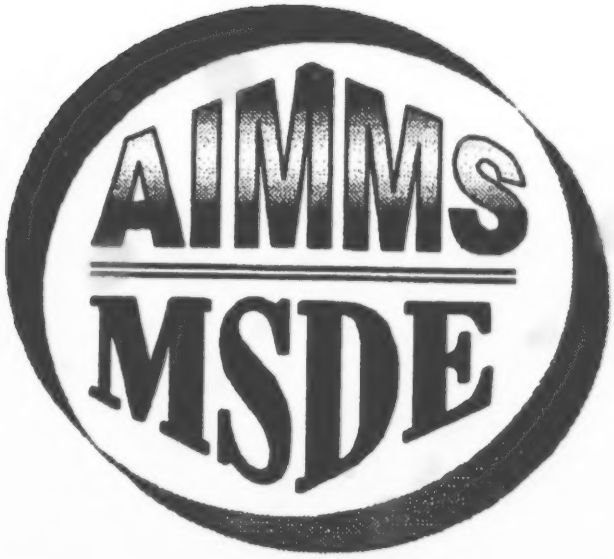

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